

**TOWN OF CHESTER  
OCTOBER 1, 2025  
PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting called to order @ 7:01pm**

**Members present: CHAIR ELFERS, MIKE MALLON, GIUSEPPE CASSARA, MARK ROBERSON**

**Members Absent: CHRIS STEERS**

**Also Present: DOMINIC CORDISCO/Planning Board Counsel, MELISSA FOOTE/Planning Board Secretary**

**Motion to approve June 4, 2025, July 16, 2025, and August 20, 2025 Minutes**

**by: GIUSEPPE CASSARA**

**Second by: MIKE MALLON**

**All in Favor: 4**

**Ayes 0 Nays**

**Other Business**

**CHAIR ELFERS** stating that no new applications were received.

**Comprehensive Plan Discussion**

**CHAIR ELFERS** summarizing the August 20, 2025 Planning Board meeting, for the Comprehensive Plan, with **ELIZABETH CASSIDY** and **KRISTEN**

**O'DONNELL/TOWN PLANNER** w/ Lanc & Tully were also in attendance to help coordinate the review process. All of those comments were submitted to **DOMINIC CORDISCO**, as well as any other additional comments from the Board. **DOMINIC CORDISCO** has been able to draft the comments so that they can be submitted to the Town Board, within the necessary time frame.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** Does the board if there are any other additional comments that haven't been submitted to **DOMINIC CORDISCO**.

*Board member had no comments.*

**DOMINIC CORDISCO** reviewing items and told the Board that he was able to view the August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Planning Board meeting online and felt the discussion was very good, with everyone being well-prepared.

After speaking with Elizabeth Cassidy, there were several comments about making things consistent or textual. She undertook those changes, and she's undertaken those already. The public hearing is scheduled for October 22, 2025. The draft that will be available to the public will include the updates you mentioned. I have prepared two separate letters; if the Board is satisfied, we can finalize them, and the Planning Board can also authorize me to send them. I could send it out tomorrow, October 2, 2025. This process began at the end of July with the formal referrals. The referral is a courtesy from the Town Board as your input is valued. The letter is generic, since there's no specific statutory criteria that have to be touched upon and it basically identifies the fact that you reviewed it, and it was found to be internally consistent. You didn't identify any

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conflicts. Now we are just discussing the Comprehensive Plan update, any conflicts with existing zoning or subdivision regulations that might require amendments, that are not already proposed in the draft rezoning, and that you don't provide any specific changes to the draft Comprehensive Plan update. I did emphasize that it has been sent around, and that the board actually agrees with the plan implementation 12 .0 which says that in order for the Comprehensive Plan to be effective the Chester Town Board must actively apply the policies that are contained within the plan. Furthermore, its Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals must use the plan as a framework to guide their decisions with respect to the review of development proposals. I'm happy to add anything additional if you think that we should or if there's something that you want to particularly point out in connection with the Comprehensive Plan.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** I think as long as **ELIZABETH CASSIDY** has taken the comments that were discussed on the 20th and she is implementing them into what was said, then I don't think we need to be as specific, especially since she's the town attorney and drafted it, and she was drafting as we were speaking as well. Personally, I think that she has taken all that into consideration.

**BOARD COMMENTS**

**MIKE MALLON:** I understand that the letter is generic; my concern would be that our specific recommendations got through.

**MARK ROBERSON:** I agree, I think that **ELIZABETH CASSIDY** has made those adjustments, and we can proceed.

**GIUSEPPE CASSARA:** In agreement.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** I will add a note to finalize that language. If the board is satisfied with that you could at this point have a motion to authorize me to prepare and finalize and send this letter to the Town Board just dealing with the Comprehensive Plan.

**Motion to Finalize the board's recommendation letters for the Comprehensive Plan Update and have DOMINIC CORDISCO draft a letter to the Town Board by: CHAIR ELFERS**

**Second by: GIUSEPPE CASSARA**

**All in Favor: 4**

**Ayes 0 Nays**

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** So that's the easier one of the two, because that the Comprehensive Plan and that's been in process and it sets for the roadmap for the town, for the next five years or so.

**MIKE MALLON:** The Comprehensive Plan Committee would like to receive a copy, or be made aware of what our recommendations are.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** We can certainly provide that to them, and we can ask **ELIZABETH CASSIDY** to make sure that it gets forwarded on to them, and I'll copy **KRISTEN O'DONELL**.

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**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** The Town of Chester's zoning code has when it relates to zoning amendments there are sections of the town's existing zoning code that spells out the time frame and also specific questions that the Planning Board is to consider when looking at the zoning amendment and they stem from state law. It's not open-ended, like does the Planning Board agree or disagree or have concerns with regard to proposed zoning amendment. It has some specific criteria. The difficulty is that these criteria were written a long time ago and they relate to when someone or a Town Board is considering a particular zoning code. So, if someone was proposing to develop some commercial property in an area that's zoned agricultural or residential and the town was considering whether or not should happen and they made that referral to the Planning Board then these questions I'm about to read to you make more sense in that context. Here you have this broad recodification and rewrite and adjustment of your zoning code. So, I'm only mentioning that because the questions, they stem from this statutory requirement, but they don't necessarily fit the particular situation that you have. So, likewise with your comments at the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, I will add in here the statement that a number of items were discussed at the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, which were being incorporated in the revised draft for the public hearing.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** That will be attached to the letter to the board right?

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** Correct. I can attach your minutes to the letter it that's what you're thinking. I don't have a particular list of everything that was discussed at the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** But it is accessible.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** Your Town Code, section 98-39, has these questions regarding the zoning code amendments. The **First Question** is whether or not the changes in the zoning code are consistent with the aims and principles embodied in the chapter of zoning regarding the particular districts concerned. Consistency is the key word. That changes that are being proposed in the amendments consistent with essentially how the districts are laid out in the town.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** Also, how the Comprehensive Plan is changing, so it kind of melds together.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** Yes, that's correct and that's actually the last one. The **Second Question** is whether or not the areas, land uses, buildings and establishments in the town will be positively affected by the changes given the overarching purpose of the zoning amendments to emphasize flexibility for economic development in modern land uses such as Battery Storage and Agritourism. That's how I responded to that particular question.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** In that particular question, is that where the zoning changes, in the cluster developments that where that would be applicable?

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** Correct. The **Third Question** is whether or not there is any indirect implications of the amendments. I wrote that they will be to clarify the code provisions and provide consistency across the zoning code. The last area of inquiry is whether or not the proposed amendments are consistent with the Comprehensive

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Development Plan. I think the answer there is that they will be because the procedural way that this will work, if the Town Board moves forward after their Public Hearing that they will adopt the Comprehensive Plan and then they'll adopt the zoning amendments. So, the zoning amendments themselves will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, even though the Comprehensive Plan will only be official moments before. So that's like the text amendments. The **Zoning Map Amendments** are specific questions, and there are five of them. The big one is whether or not the use is permitted in the districts that are shown on the zoning map are appropriate in the areas that may be affected.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** I believe there were only two areas of change to that, and we had discussed that at the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** The **Second Question** is whether or not there's adequate public school facilities or any other public services that exist or can be created to serve the needs of additional residences that might be constructed. I think the answer to that is Yes. The **Third Question** is whether or not the proposed changes, and again we're just talking about the zoning map amendments are in accord with existing or proposed plans in the vicinity. The **Fourth Question** is the effect of the proposed amended is consistent with the growth of the town as envisioned by the Comprehensive Development Plan. The **Fifth Question** is that the proposed amendment is likely to result in no substantial increase or decrease in the total zoned residential capacity of the town. Again, these questions just go to the zoning map amendments. In addition, there some specific comments that we had that I incorporated into clearly defining Clear Cutting. What it means if for substantially all trees on the site or portion of site. This was a comment that came in afterward. Also, the tree survey requirements were inconsistent in terms of how you measure trees, and there's a recommendation on that. I can add in anything additional that the board may have or may want to point out as it relates to these zoning, either map or text amendments.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** The only comment or question that I have is not in the map n the amendments, it's the bulk tables for the cluster development. What was changed was the size was increased from  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre to an acre and a  $\frac{1}{2}$ . So, from 2017 – 2025 that frontage was changed, the sides, and overall development coverage was reduced. So, in a cluster development, it's actually not allowing as many housed as it originally did and therefore it doesn't allow as much give back land. In my opinion it doesn't allow where you would get more affordable housing because in most of our zones, its an SR3, SR2. This allowed people to afford a home on lesser acreage.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** I'm happy to add something in, if that's the desire of the board.

**JACKIE ELFERS:** That's just my opinion. I think we have to come together as a board.

**MIKE MALLON:** Affordable housing is tough because the intent is there, but the property values, and the reality is everything is so high in local real estate.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** And I don't know if it even would be that much of a push that would drop prices that much but if it would drop it enough that it would cause someone to be able to purchase their first home or purchase a home in the Town of Chester, that's what

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you want. You want younger people here. You want the area to grow. Like what you said about the schools. Do we have enough schools for enough houses? But if we have all older people (like me) and we don't have enough people in the school, and we're paying taxes, it's a balance. **MARK ROBERSON**, what are your thoughts?

**MARK ROBERSON:** I'm not sure if I agree to a point. I'm not sure if it's going to exclude folks from purchasing homes, just because  $\frac{3}{4}$  to an acre and a  $\frac{1}{2}$ , the size of the house may not change and I don't think your necessarily getting taxed for that  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre plus more. That would exclude people from moving in here and not drop the price enough.

**GIUSEPPE CASSARA:** The only comment I would have would be if you're going to  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre as you said earlier, you're not giving back land. You're not dedicating any Open Space but when you cluster it to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre, you have more land to give back.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** I would say together as a board that we're not together on that.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** One option that you would have if you feel strongly about is, is you can certainly comment to the Town Board public hearing, or send a letter. Even though you are the Chair of the Planning Board, it doesn't mean that you give up your ability to have your own thoughts and opinions and express them on matters that are pending.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** I guess then we don't include it and then we'll move from there. But I think that everything that you have outlined for us is very strong, and we have answered all questions. I think as a board we just take a poll that this second portion for the zoning can be solidified and sent off.

*\*All Board Members agree\**

**Discussion of MuniCollab Software**

**Muni Collab is a software developed by ABE UCHITTEL for Planning Boards; tailored to Planning Board workflows.**

Modernizes, streamlines operations, and enhances transparency for applicants & public.

Auto-generates checklists, tracks project status, and clarifies zoning by SBL

Adopted by Town of Warwick (July) and Town of Cornwall

Rollout takes 4–6 weeks with mandatory training.

Public and applicants can access project materials, maps, and submission status online; customizable for local needs.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO** stating that he represents the Town of Cornwall, and the Town of Cornwall uses this Software. Seeing a different level of engagement because the way it was done before on the Town's website, you would have to go through multiple links to get the information needed. MuniCollab simplifies this. There's also a Map that

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MuniCollab utilizes showing where the proposed projects are. The public can click on it and have access to documents submitted for the proposed project.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** It engages the public because of its accessibility and the of use.

**DOMINIC CORDISCO:** You may still want to receive hard copies, as some Board Members, and the Engineer may want that; as I've seen on other boards.

**CHAIR ELFERS:** Well, it's personalizing it too, and we could make requirements.

**MELISSA FOOTE:** I would say two sets, and the digital.

**JACKIE ELFERS:** This is being brought to us so everybody's aware of the direction and the Town Board is going to be reviewing it next week. If the Board can look and play around with it and hopefully this is the direction, we're going to end up in.

All Board Members were all in agreement that this would be a benefit for the Town of Chester Planning Board & the public.

**Motion to adjourn meeting to go into Executive Session as there are no additional actions after the Executive Session by: MARK ROBERSON**

**Second by: MIKE MALLON**

**All in Favor: 4**

**Ayes 0 Nays**

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:37pm**